



The Equal Times

The Newsletter of Equality Colorado

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stop · think · peace



Marriage: How Does It Serve Us?

Kevin Maly

I'm going to climb out on a limb here and probably get perilously close to falling off and breaking my neck. I am, frankly, having trouble getting excited about same-sex marriage, or, better put, "equal marriage rights." It's not that I'm against GLBT people having rights that are fully equal to those of all other citizens, it's just that I'm having a difficult time seeing marriage as a liberating institution, for queer people or for anyone.

Marriage is a shaky structure in this post-modern world of ours, cobbled together from bits and pieces gathered from here and there. Hollywood and mass culture contribute a few scraps, faith traditions add some lumber, the civil order throws in its material and the whole thing is nailed together through a questionable alliance between religion and the state.

I hesitate to count the number of weddings I've presided at, for to do so is to remember the too-many premarital counseling sessions marked by unrealistic notions of marriage that had their origins in Walt Disney and other Hollywood production houses. The Prince Charmings and the Cinderellas would waltz into my study, firmly convinced that now that they had found each other, they would both live happily ever after. Throw into that mix a large dose of Hallmark cards, glitzy bridal magazines, and overwrought romance novels and you've got a noxious brew of expectations almost guaranteed to kill off any hopes of a mature and lasting relationship.

Consumerism gets into the mix far beyond the shock of the wedding and floral industries. Marriage, for many, has become something akin to buying a house. Just as people purchase starter homes and move up through a series of ever-more prestigious domiciles, so do many Americans shed their starter marriages and move on to trophy marriages and the eventual retirement marriage. The consumerist obsession with buying up is becoming the cultural ethos that surpasses all rationality.

Marriage, as it is talked about in faith communities, is not a cleanly, clearly delineated construct either. It's not like a bris, a bar mitzvah or a baptism. Those rituals are relatively stable through the ages and their meanings are, by and large, clear. Marriage is another matter. Certainly the words for marriage appear in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, but no clear understanding of marriage emerges. We read that the Kings of Israel had multiple wives. We read of arranged marriages. Close reading of texts makes evident that women were considered as property, first the property of their fathers, to be traded like a commodity to an eligible male, and then the property of their husbands. We hear an early Christian writer (some say St. Paul) telling women to be subject to their husbands. We also hear that it is better for men to stay single than to marry; marriage is, however, preferable to burning with lust. (What's this tell you about the role of women in that time and place?) And we hear Jesus telling that in heaven there is no such thing as marriage. (Hmm. Is that why they call it heaven?)

If this isn't confusing enough, we have

the long tradition of the Western Church that makes marriage a sacrament, but which, for centuries, upheld celibacy and virginity as spiritually superior states of being. Protestant traditions aren't any better; while some denominations are clear that marriage is not a sacrament, there is little in post-reformation traditions that articulates what marriage is. What does remain is plenty of language about Christ the Bridegroom and the Church his bride. Hmm. If Christ is Son of God and the Church is we flawed mortals, does that mean that in our earthly marriages the husband is Son of God and the wife a mere, weak mortal? Certainly Promise Keepers and more than a few others promote

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sacraments,
etc. Let's look
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rights. . . ."
.....

this unequal coupling.

And then there's the sex thing. Our various and sundry religious traditions teach that sex is reserved for marriage. (We won't even get into the whole procreation thing, not now.) When sexuality is legitimate only within the bounds of marriage, marriage is thereby made the policing structure for human desire. We further go on to burden children born outside of the married sexual union with the label "illegitimate."

Then there's the civil realm. In and through the state, marriage becomes the gateway to special legal and economic privileges. At a recent discussion of equal marriage rights, Evan Wolfson of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund told GLBT religious leaders that marriage for GLBT people would give us the same legal and economic privileges that heterosexuals have: joint property rights, inheritance rights, next-of-kin rights, adoption rights, and division-of-property rights upon the dissolution of a marriage. These rights do not, however, accrue to them that lack the signed piece of paper that certifies their wedded status.

If all this weren't enough, in the United States, we do something uniquely peculiar among Western nations, made exponentially more peculiar by our claims to separation of "church" and state: we conflate civil marriage and religious marriage. Rabbis, priests and ministers become agents of the government, signing both civil and religious documents when they preside at weddings. Equally peculiar is that civil marriages are frequently recognized as valid by religious communities. It gets worse. A gay clergy friend of mine remarked to me the other day that once the state "recognizes gay marriage, then we by dint of marriage become fully legitimate in the eyes of the church and so we can get marriage and become legitimately ordained." Unfortunately, I get the logic, creepy as it all seems.

Now all this brings me to The Big Question: Where do love and mutuality fit in? Let's set aside the historical baggage, the problems of spouse-as-property, the problems of male privilege, the problems of sacraments, etc. Let's look at what we're trying to gain with equal marriage rights and what all this marriage talk makes of the beloved. If we view marriage as the structure whereby we gain civil and economic legitimacy, if we view marriage as the vehicle for legitimacy in our faith communities, if we view marriage as the structure that legitimizes our desire and pleasure, what becomes of the person to whom I am wed? Is s/he merely or mostly (or even partially) the means to an end? Do I marry that person that I might become more legitimate? And if my spouse is truly my beloved, does the structure of marriage give to that person not the sovereignty of being significant other, but the burden of being legitimizing other? What becomes of our love, our companionship, our mutuality?

But note, this not a burden laid solely upon "same-sex" marriage. I would posit that compulsory-coupling-for-legitimization is a heterosexual problem. I have, finally to my own shock, come to the place where I understand those heterosexual (and occasional queer) couples who shun marriage because it has less to do with true love, companionship, and mutuality than with it being a legitimizing structure that reduces the beloved to a legitimizing object. That's not to say that given the right, I would never marry. I remain convinced, deep down, that marriage can be a good thing. My parents' marriage of 42 years was a thing of beauty. My mom and dad were best of friends and their marriage provided each of them a safe harbor. It was, I need to note, however, a marriage that lacked legitimacy in the eyes of some. My parents were of different ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds. My father had been previously married and that marriage ended in messy divorce. There was family and religious disapproval to deal with and there was a significant difference in their ages. In some ways, marriage only heightened their illegitimacy as a couple, which had the effect, I believe, of their marriage becoming one of unconditional love and equal partnership. Their marriage was, ultimately, about them and not about an acquired legitimacy.

Right now our queer unions are not legitimate and there is little to gain by entering into unrecognized marriages. This raises the possibility that something other than legitimization might be, now and again (no, not always), at the core of our unions (ceremonialized or not). Our couplehood, our partnerships every once in a while just might offer models of mutuality that transcend the vagaries of post-modern marriage. In other words, our marriages—or whatever you want to call them—might just be about love, partnership, equality and not about acquiring cultural legitimacy. It is precisely here where we might have something to offer toward the reconstruction of marriage. But I wonder, will equal marriage rights for queers deter us from such projects of liberation?

The State Supreme Court of either Hawaii or of Vermont may issue a ruling any day now that will grant GLBT people equal marriage rights. And, yes, I guess that's a good thing. Equality is what we're fighting for. But still I wonder. Will our hard won bits of queer wisdom be lost on that day when we become one with the world that has hated us so? Will we assimilate ourselves by walking over the threshold and into that decrepit structure that is contemporary marriage, U.S. style? Or will we have the vision to offer to the rest of the world what we might have learned about partnership when there was no legitimate marriage for queers? I'm going to hold out for the redemptive moment—namely, that from our oppression we have gained, and do continue to gain, insights that can be joined to the insights of others who struggle, and that together, we can walk out into the world with a gift that can help transform this ancient and troubled sphere into a world where justice rolls down like water and righteousness—an ever-flowing stream.

Upcoming Events:

Solidarity Sunday

Sunday, October 4, 1999

SEE PAGE 4
FOR MORE DETAILS

Greeley Ballot Initiative

SEE PAGE 4
FOR MORE DETAILS

Justice Now and Claiming the Spirit

Friday, October 15 through
Sunday, October 17

SEE PAGE 5
FOR MORE DETAILS



DIRECTOR'S CUT

BY LORI CIRVAN

Equality Colorado is proud to introduce Lori Cirvan as the new Executive Director.

During one of those informal conversations that followed the interview for the Executive Director position at Equality Colorado, I was chatting about which high school I attended in Denver (Cherry Creek). "Oh, is that where you came out?" I was asked casually. "No," I answered politely.

Inside, I thought incredulously, come out? At Cherry Creek? We're talking about the early '80s, when my sole references to homosexuality were the venomously spewed-out rumors about this teacher or that athletic coach or that 'odd' student.

No, my coming out was like a quilt coming out of the dryer after too many minutes on the hot cycle--colors faded, shrunk to a third of its original size, with the seams stretched to bursting. I floated through the better part of my senior year on a manic-depressive diet of Quaaludes, alcohol and cocaine (unlike President Clinton, want-to-be-President Bush Jr. and other politicians, I admit to having a history). I was lucky to come out alive. Come out at Cherry Creek? No, I just went away.

I went away to study literature and philosophy, with a passion for women's studies and extracurricular activism for a myriad of causes, including a fledgling gay-straight alliance on campus. A feminist proposal to study traditional educational systems among women in Sierra Leone landed me a two-year, \$10,000 study grant and launched a career as a development worker in Africa.

There, working with women fighting to meet the needs of their families as well as with communities struggling with conflict, poverty, and the legacy of war and apartheid, I learned to appreciate tolerance, patience and courage. Working with local community groups, non-governmental organizations and international donors, I honed my skills in policy research, project management and organizational development. And, finally, working with people willing to stick their necks out on the highly taboo issue of human rights for LGBT Namibians, I developed self-acceptance and garnered the strength to come out, leave a comfortable, well-paying job and come home to do the same.

I have remained a citizen, even when bouncing around the planet. So, this is my long delayed coming out in Colorado--coming back.

I come back to a state greatly and positively changed. The many milestones achieved during my tenure overseas are due largely to the efforts of Sue Anderson and the staff, board, and supporters of Equality Colorado (EC) and the LGBT communities.

I also come back to a state not much changed at all. Wearing the glasses of a prodigal daughter of Colorado, it is clear to me that EC's programs are needed more than ever:

Political Action: Amendment 2 was passed by voters and overturned by the Supreme Court, forcing our citizens to debate discrimination publicly and vocally. I am gratified to see how this decision is helping people around the country to challenge discrimination and bigotry.

However, other recent victories, including the decision of United Airlines to offer domestic partnerships, underscore the critical importance of legal recourse through local ordinances and state laws. We still

lack solid legal protection against discrimination and violence. Both the Civil Rights and Hate Crimes Bills, while finally reaching the floor of the Colorado legislature earlier this year, have yet to be passed. Our relationships and families are still not recognized. And our existing legal and social gains face ongoing attacks by the radical right.

Anti-Violence Program: There is now growing recognition that LGBT Coloradans and others perceived to be different are more likely to be the victims of crime and violence than are non-LGBT people. We now also acknowledge violence and abuse within our community and in our relationships. Through the Anti-Violence Program and other initiatives, victims now have access to crisis support, advocacy and social services. Nevertheless, hate crimes and domestic violence continue unabated. Any legal and social gains we achieve are hollow if we live in fear of violence inside and outside of our homes, workplaces and social venues.

Voices of Faith for Human Rights: Over 80 churches and religious institutions in Colorado welcome and support members of our community. In growing numbers, we are exploring our spirituality, a possibility long rejected by those of us raised to hear that we do not qualify for God's love and compassion.

Yet, earlier this month in Denver the Lutheran church upheld its law of precluding "practicing" homosexuals from its ordained ministry. And in barring two clergy from continuing work with their New Ways Ministry, the Roman Catholic Church opted for another message of exclusion and rejection. Sadly, then, many of us still must deny our sexual orientation and the existence of our partners to find acceptance in our churches.

Statewide Community Organizing: We now organize and educate through local LGBT organizations, other social justice groups, and university organizations. We also meet in gay-friendly social venues, openly publicized events, and LGBT support groups. EC has been working with communities around the state to establish libraries serving LGBT residents and other interested people. Nevertheless, people living in other locations, whether in small rural towns or poor urban neighborhoods, do not have knowledge of and access to the majority of these resources, concentrated in Denver and other metropolitan areas. More importantly, their voices often remain unheard by decision-makers and activists.

Colorado Safe Schools Coalition/Youth Empowerment: Young Coloradans also have increased access--albeit far too limited and far too inconsistent--to information, supportive counselors and teachers, and community centers, such as Rainbow Alley. Indeed, the battle of the courageous gay-straight alliance (HHART) at Smoky Hill High School, as well as the work of the Colorado Safe Schools Coalition, highlights the importance of young people themselves working to create tolerant, safe environments.

Yet, our schools are neither safe nor tolerant. The hate-driven massacre at Columbine is an extreme example. A more typical example is the everyday verbal abuse, the esteem-destroying indignities and the physical harassment suffered by students perceived to be 'different.' A groundbreaking, statewide survey in

Massachusetts recently confirmed that LGBT youth, as well as those still questioning, are more likely to have mental health problems, to abuse drugs and alcohol, to encounter violence and to engage in risky sexual behavior than non-LGBT youth. I do not imagine this picture is considerably different in Colorado.

As in the past, EC's most formidable task is to achieve equitable public policies while ensuring that our programs address the everyday needs of LGBT people and allies around the state. In fulfilling our mission, we, together with our allies, need to continue addressing two ongoing challenges:

Inclusivity. Our community's strength is our diversity. We are every hue, creed and class. We are lesbian, gay, bisexual AND transgender. We are open, closeted and still questioning. Whether the issue is continued funding for HIV/AIDS, reform of adoption laws, or improving economic assistance programs, we walk on common ground with others suffering prejudice. We must work in our towns, faith communities and other organizations to bridge the racial, gender and economic divisions that prevent our voices from resonating to every corner of the state.

Keeping Momentum. For those of us with secure jobs and benefits while living in funky, gay-friendly neighborhoods (and I just rented an apartment in one), it is easy to forget that these gains are neither permanent nor guaranteed. For those of us who gave time, money and energy to overturning Amendment 2, it is easy to forget that this effort was only one lap in the civil rights movement, an endurance event. For those of us working with other disenfranchised groups and social issues, it is easy to see civil rights for the LGBT community as an afterthought rather than a necessary component of equal rights for all. (Admittedly, this was my own approach for many years.)

The Justice Now/Claiming the Spirit conference in October will provide an excellent opportunity to re-express our commitment and to reinvigorate our movement for human rights and dignity. I urge you to attend and to contact us with your ideas. And please continue to read the Activist News online or in your mail box and to take action.

I am excited and honored to take the baton from Sue as Equality Colorado moves into the next century. I am eager to hear your ideas and feedback on how we can continue to effectively work for equality, justice and respect for LGBT people.

And, I, along with the EC team, will be coming out--to a community hall, school, or legislative chamber near you.

J. Ryan Kennedy

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The Equal Times is the newsletter of Equality Colorado. Equality Colorado's mission is to work to secure equality and justice for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. Equality Colorado seeks to create an environment where people are respected, open dialogue is encouraged and the truth is spoken about the diversity of our families and sexual identities.

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Equality Colorado



Meet Equality Colorado's New Staff

Jeannette Galanis

I am excited to be at Equality Colorado in the position of the new Development Director. A native of Denver, I recently moved back to Colorado from Washington, DC, where I have spent the last five years. While in DC, I worked for such organizations as the National Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, Public Citizen, and the US Student Association doing political organizing, speechwriting, and lobbying.

When asked why I decided to move back to Colorado, I replied that it is just a natural response to want to return. I feel that my heart has always been in Colorado and that my talents can be better used on the state-level--especially during a Congress that pushes the power back to the states in order to avoid making any decisions. When asked why I chose to work for Equality Colorado, I said "Equality Colorado is the state's strongest voice for civil rights and equal access issues, especially facing the LGBT community. Colorado may be the home to the radical right, but it is also home to many people who believe in and want to actively support a healthy and accepting environment for the LGBT community in Colorado. Equality Colorado has established itself around having a strong grassroots approach to building community as well as political power in the state. I wanted to be a part of the effort. I was flattered to accept the position of Development Director."

My goals for the rest of the year are to more fully develop and diversify the funding base of Equality Colorado by expanding the individual giving and major donor programs while increasing the amount of support Equality Colorado receives from the corporate community. Additionally, I plan to assist in further developing the political and legislative agenda and voice of Equality Colorado by tapping into new financial resources.

My favorite things to do are raise money for good causes; play tennis; eat good Greek food; and, of course, shop.

To reach me please call the Equality Colorado office at (303) 839-5540 or e-mail me at jeannetteg@equalitycolorado.org

Kirsten Peterson

Hi, my name is Kirsten Peterson, and I am the new Voices of Faith Associate at Equality Colorado. As part of the Urban Servant Corps, I am committed to

volunteering here while living in a community with eight other people who volunteer at various other peace and justice organizations in Denver. I am eager to be here connecting with the GLBT community and providing outreach into faith communities. I come to the position driven from the desire for communities that respect the diversity evident in our society. My hope is that spirituality can become a force that binds us rather than more reason for divisiveness. Before moving here I lived in Decorah, Iowa where I graduated in May 1999 from Luther College with a German major, at Luther I was active in the GLBT community. Where we recently worked to become a Reconciling in Christ Congregation. Holding forums and discussion groups at Luther where student and staff could feel open and safe to speak about their personal experiences and thoughts on GLBT issues was particularly enriching to my understanding of how divisive and hurtful these issues can be. But more importantly, I discovered how people really can come to understand and respect each other. Most recently I have been working at an organic vegetable and flower farm, and a Coffeehouse in Decorah. I grew up in California, Minnesota and Wisconsin, and have lived in Germany. I am eager to meet many of you and to join you in our mutual work of securing equality and justice for GLBT people here in Colorado.

Kevin Jordan Bourque

I was recently dredged from the swamps of the Deep South in order to spend a year doing Americorps VISTA Volunteer service with Equality Colorado. I will be working specifically with the Anti-Violence Program and in community outreach. I have studied at the University of Helsinki and the Louisiana Scholar's College, where I earned a degree in Humanities and Social Thought (including gender studies, gay/lesbian studies, literature, philosophy, and myriad other things not entirely advantageous in the current job market). Additionally, although my thesis 'Five Tired Screaming Fairy Queens and One Anxious Queer: The Evolution of the Self-Identified Homosexual in Anglo-American Literature, from Identification to Normalization' was (surprisingly enough) not the longest title, it did shock the most parents at my graduation.

My GLBT-related experience includes work with college

queer organizations, specifically in community outreach and the implementation of HIV testing programs. My hopes for this year in Denver are to both learn more about grassroots queer-related organizing in the local community and to help make the state -- and the nation -- a safer, happier, and queerer place to be. In other words, I'm here, I'm queer, and I'm looking forward to a productive year.

Carter Klenk

I am Carter Klenk, a recently reformed East Coaster and a new Americorps/VISTA volunteer with the Anti-Violence Program, working specifically with the Colorado Safe Schools Coalition. I have participated in many activities and positions addressing GLBT issues and have a strong background in youth services. I am looking forward to the opportunity to combine these interests and to help make schools a safe space for all people. It is my vehement belief that working with youth in order to stop the cycles of violence and hate will ultimately help create a society in which GLTB folk of all ages find acceptance and justice. I recently relocated to Denver from New York with pug dog Oona and my partner in tow. Originally from Delaware (and having lived to tell the tale), I attended Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania where I majored in Sociology, focusing on HIV/AIDS and sexuality. During college I was a student intern at an HIV/AIDS community service center in Philadelphia, a volunteer at Philly's only needle exchange program, an active participant in the Rainbow Alliance (Bryn Mawr's GLBT organization) and an ardent rugby player. At Bryn Mawr I had the experience of living in a community in which respectful action, acceptance of all people and personal responsibility are the deeply internalized norm. This instilled in me a strong desire to make working for social justice my life's work. After leaving Bryn Mawr I worked as an Assistant Director for the Public Interest Research Group's summer environmental campaign in Boston Massachusetts. Most recently, I was a Case Manager at Big Brothers Big Sisters in Poughkeepsie, New York. There, I ran "Life Choices," a program for teenagers designed to address issues such as conflict resolution, sexuality, pregnancy prevention and respect for all people. I look forward to

continued work on youth and social justice issues (and lots of snowboarding this winter!).

Leslie Burkholder

Leslie is the new Safe Schools Coordinator for the Colorado Safe Schools Coalition.

When people in my family wonder where my strong drive and passion for social justice activism originated, I help them recall times long ago when my mom took me on marches in support of the Equal Rights Amendment and against Denver's "brown cloud." The seeds of social activism were planted deeply at an early age.

I have been an educator for more than seven years, and four of those years have been dedicated to working with a focus on HIV and AIDS education. My passion for HIV prevention education developed through a combination of personal experiences and losses, my tenure as a public school educator, and my increasing personal outrage in the face of overwhelming ignorance with regard to the disease that I continuously encountered. Working professionally in the HIV and AIDS education field culminated when I became Director of Educational Services for the Northern Colorado AIDS Project (NCAP), based in Fort Collins.

A Colorado native, I have lived and worked in both urban and rural regions within the state. This past spring, I launched Idea Infusion, a Denver-based business offering consulting and contracting services specializing in HIV prevention, health education, and social justice activism. In addition to recently taking on the duties of Coordinator for the Colorado Safe Schools Coalition (CSSC), I am very active in the planning and coordinating of efforts for the U.S. Conference on AIDS to be held in Denver this November.

Thanks to the efforts of Lynn Levine, former CSSC Coordinator, there exists a solid foundation from which the coalition can continue to grow and reach a greater number of Colorado schools, students, teachers, and administrators. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to the efforts of this dynamic coalition. I look forward to continuing my own "herstory" of social activism here with the CSSC.

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Pride in the Rockies

Samantha Frazee

"I, Mary Lou Makepeace, Mayor of the City of Colorado Springs, do hereby proclaim the week of August 21-29, 1999 as Pridefest Week."

With that kind of support, it's no surprise that Colorado Springs' 9th annual Pridefest celebration went beautifully. With her proclamation, Mary Lou Makepeace proved that she is a mayor for all people in Colorado Springs. Although her statement angered some residents of Colorado Springs, it encouraged and excited many others.

A crowd of at least 5,000 turned out for the parade and festival activities Sunday, August 29 with barely a handful of protesters. Food, music, arts and crafts, and beautiful weather combined to create a fabulous atmosphere for this year's Pride celebration. The weekend kicked off on Friday evening with MusicFest '99 at the Colorado Music Hall. Co-hosted by Inside/Out Youth Services and the Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center this year's MusicFest was expanded to two nights because of its huge success last year. The performers on both Friday and Saturday nights were equally talented and entertaining. All performers were from the Colorado Springs or Denver area.

Friday's talent included Lisa Lucero, who both wrote and performed Impossible Body. The performance was an exploration of sexual, gender and racial identity, politics, fear and community, love, commitment and family. Denver was well represented by Dear Marsha, a band that "has way too much fun!" An 11 member band from Woodland Park, Shades, considers itself a "melting pot of individuals, styles and backgrounds, with a common goal of unity, philanthropy and music." Juliet, a full time Colorado Springs firefighter, rocked the house with her songs "Rogue Amazon" and "I Need A Man." Saturday night's performers included former Inside/Out executive director Julia McKay, who worked wonders on the piano; Brian Justice, whose "Appalachian-American" attitude had a grin on everyone's face; The Unfocused Family, an appropriately named band for Colorado Springs whose music had people on the floor dancing the night away; and Buddy Love, a high energy "funk oriented" band whose popularity increases with every performance.

Community Organizing

Nick Sarchet

Welcome to the new and improved field program of Equality Colorado. You're bound to notice some changes in the coming months; I hope that you all will take this opportunity to really give YOUR input to the program. First, we have changed the program formerly known as Field Organizing to Community Organizing. Although this may not seem like a big deal, it is a conscious and intentional decision to look at state-wide organizing as a community based program.

As the newest Community Organizer for Equality Colorado, I hope to be a real conduit between the many diverse communities we serve and the programs we offer. Community organizing is really about the idea that people can and should come together to talk about what matters to them, and then work together to successfully change their communities. It is the process by which people identify common problems or goals, and then collaboratively find ways to develop and implement strategies for reaching the objectives they want to accomplish by mobilizing resources.

In order to be a successful organizer it is important that I gain an understanding of each community that Equality Colorado serves. Each community has different priorities, needs and resources. I need folks in each and every community to share their insights with me so that together we can use our collective power effectively.

As a GLBT and allied community we have many ways to generate and use our power. One of our most effective tools is our political and legislative power. This year we continued to make strides at the Capitol, despite a swing towards conservatism in last November's election. Both the Hate Crimes Bill and the Civil Rights Bill made it out of committee and onto the floor for a full House vote, the farthest they have ever progressed in Colorado. This was made possible by the education we collectively give our legislators year after year.

It is our power and our potential to collaborate across issues that will make us effective. Community organizing works in large part because of the strength that exists in numbers. The idea that "what we can't do alone, we can often accomplish together" is what community organization is all about.

An important point to remember is that community organizing is fundamentally a grassroots process. It's not about an outside "expert" going in and telling a community what they should work on. Instead, it's about members of the community getting angry, getting sad, or getting excited about something, and using that energy to take steps to make things better. We can all work at empowering each other to improve our lives.

It is important to me and to Equality Colorado to find out what is important to you and your communities and then help you reach your goals. By working together we can create a shift in power that is built from a broad base of people.

So get involved and get active! Contact Nick in the Denver office or Christy in the Colorado Springs office.

Anti-Discrimination Goes to the Polls in Greeley

Nick Sarchet

After months of petitioning, Concerned Citizens for Human Rights (CCHR) surpassed the 916 signatures they needed to put an anti-discrimination ordinance on the November ballot. Greeley City Council voted 3-2 in favor of putting the issues in front of voters during the November 2nd Municipal Elections. The proposed ordinance would prohibit discrimination in jobs, housing, and public accommodation based on race, sexual orientation, disability and other characteristics. Greeley currently does not have a law that outlaws discrimination.

If you are interested in participating in or supporting CCHR's efforts in Greeley, please contact Steve Brown at (970) 330-0301. CCHR will be meeting every Monday at 7 p.m. at the Family of Christ Presbyterian Church, which is located at 2410 35th Avenue in Greeley.

LOST AND FOUND: NOW WHAT A Black Lesbian's Perspective

Nesha

I am originally from Alabama and when I first moved to Colorado Springs there were no communities to be found. No black community, no gay community, no black gay community, no black lesbian community. Where were my "peoples"? Upon my arrival, it was immediately apparent to me that the Springs was very white and very conservative, even more so than where I grew up and that says quite a bit. Also, it didn't take long for me to realize that if I wanted to be in routine contact with the black community, I would have to find them, something I had never had to do before. This was quite different from what I was accustomed. I had no idea how illusive this hide and seek journey would be. Literally, I would go for months at a time and not see one African American person from day to day and when I did happen upon a concentration of us, there were merely three or four. Although the forecast looked bleak, drawing on the determination and optimism by which my mother raised me, I pursued my quest for community.

Initially, as with anyone moving across the country for the first time in her or his life, I was mostly concerned with setting up house. You know, a roof over my head, finding a job, meeting and greeting my in-laws, making the Springs a home away from home. So, I found a job, several in fact. I worked through a few kinks and fell in love with my new, very giving family. I embarked upon a career in real estate by enrolling in classes. It seemed I was well on my way to creating a home here in the Springs.

Now that the mechanics were out of the way, on to my next task, find the communities. Any kind of community--black community, church community, and gay community. Considering my experiences thus far, I had concluded that finding the Black community would be the hardest. You see, back home we have "hoods" and any African American person's path you happen to cross, regardless of his or her economic or social status, can direct you there. The foot-stomping-dancing-for-Christ-mass-choir-church-community I was

looking for is almost synonymous with the black community. Wherever I found that, I would find them. With a little perseverance, I found bits and pieces of the gay community. Remnants, you might say; I would later find out that I had merely scraped the surface. How did I go about achieving this you might ask? No special formula, the usual. I went to the bars. We were there. I went to the churches. And we were there. We as in gays not as in blacks. I have been consistent and persistent in my search for the black community within the gay community. I am slowly making headway, one introduction at a time.

Being black and gay in the Springs mirrors just being black in the Springs. I have found that I am still faced with the trials and tribulations of being black, even more so than any struggles of being gay. As we in the gay community are struggling to build a solid community, we are trying to bond with those who truly understand our plight and experiences; those who can support us through the experience of coming out to our families, those who can support us through the experience of losing not just a loved one but a lover to AIDS, and those who can support us through the experience of serving for our country in silence.

In that respect, I need my black community that truly understands and has experienced my injustices because of race.

We as gays have a choice in deciding whether we want to or can afford to be out. Having that choice doesn't necessarily make it any easier or less emotional. Nevertheless, the option is there. There is no option for me not to be Black in America. Not that I would choose it should it be presented to me. I am proud of my culture and my heritage. I am proud of the strengths my people have expressed throughout history. Always at the core of our struggles was community, a very essential part.

My strength lies in both communities, black and gay, but I am wounded. I miss and need the black community within the gay and lesbian community. Now, where are you?

Solidarity Sunday Set for October 4

For the fifth year in a row, Dignity/USA, a Roman Catholic GLBT organization, is urging Catholics along with all people of faith and goodwill to celebrate Solidarity Sunday. This year the faith-based anti-violence initiative will be observed on October 4.

People participating in Solidarity Sunday are asked to do five things: 1) wear a rainbow ribbon on Sunday, October 4; 2) for those who wish, pray for an end to anti-GLBT violence, using the prayer printed on cards distributed through Dignity and other faith-based organizations; 3) take the Solidarity pledge also printed on the card; 4) invite friends and relatives to wear the ribbon and take the pledge; 5) consider offering educational programs.

People from many different faith traditions, along with secular organizations, have participated in the program. The program has grown to include PFLAG chapters, synagogues, and churches of many traditions, including congregations from Episcopal, MCC, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and Unitarian traditions, to name a few.

More information about Solidarity Sunday and how to order Solidarity Cards and Ribbons may be obtained by contacting SolSunday@AOL.COM or by calling Kevin Maly, Voices of Faith Director at Equality Colorado at 303.839.5540.

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Rainbow Cottage for Seniors

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Call 303-984-4245 to find out more.



Justice Now and Claiming the Spirit Conference

The Fifth Annual Claiming the Spirit Conference and the Third Annual Justice Now Conference are joining forces this year to let Colorado Springs know "We are here!!!" Conference planners have put together an exciting slate of events for political activists and people of faith who are dedicated to building a society where liberty and justice are truly for all... no exceptions.

The combined conference will begin on Friday, October 15, with an all day Institute. Everyone interested in community organizing will want to be a part of "Organize, Educate, & Advocate: Community Organizing Training." We will be joined by people outside the GLBT community, and this will provide an opportunity to do some important relationship building.

Following Oneg Shabbat, a service at sunset Friday to mark the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, we'll gather for an opening plenary and reception that will set the tone for the weekend.

Saturday's schedule will be full, with nearly twenty workshops for you to choose from (see "Programming" to the right). Saturday evening participants may gather again to mark the end of Sabbath and later to celebrate Christian Sabbath. After dinner, on your own at host restaurants, you'll have the opportunity to attend a GLBT theatre production of "Eye of the Gull."

The conference ends early Sunday afternoon following more workshops and a closing Brunch plenary.

We hope you'll join with other GLBT people, their friends, family, and allies from throughout Colorado to learn, to organize, to laugh, perhaps to heal, to renew old ties and make some new ones. Register NOW for this special Justice Now & Claiming the Spirit. Early rates are best!

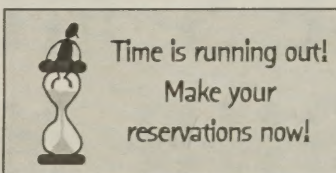
Programming:

- **Special Friday Institute:** "Organize, Educate & Advocate: Community Organizing and Training" Sponsored by The Gill Foundation and presented by The Center for Third World Organizing
- Diversity in the GLBT movement
- Jewish approaches to GLBT issues
- Equal Marriage Rights
- Youth and young adult issues, including safe schools, safe dating and social activities, sexual behavior and boundaries
- Legal and financial issues for GLBT people and their families
- GLBT adoption rights
- Sexual Ethics
- Campus Organizing: Getting Connected
- What the Bible *really* says about Homosexuality
- Health and wellness issues for the GLBT community
- Hate crime marginalization: Young and eclectic, elderly and vulnerable
- Anti-violence legislative issues
- Coalition building
- Legislative recap and preview
- and More!

Logistics

Housing:

The LeBaron Hotel is located off of I-25 at the Bijou Street exit (exit number 142) in Colorado Springs. The address is 314 West Bijou Street. Amenities include a fitness room and a year-round gazebo-covered spa. For reservations, please call 800-477-8612 or 719-329-7444. Specify that you are with Equality Colorado's Justice Now/Claiming the Spirit conference for the \$75.00 a night room rate (up to four people per room per night). **You must reserve your room by September 20 for the conference rate.** Limited local community housing is available. Contact Christy by October 1 at 719-227-8545 or email her at christyp@equalitycolorado.org.



Meals:

The registration fees include lunch Friday (for those registering for the entire conference or for the Institute only), Saturday lunch and brunch on Sunday. Vegetarian dishes will be available. Dinners on Friday and Saturday are "on your own." We will identify several Colorado Springs dining establishments that have agreed to be "host" restaurants.

Registration Rates:

Regular

<i>(September 1 through October 1)</i>	
Entire Conference:	\$90.00
Without Institute:	\$80.00

Late

<i>(After October 1)</i>	
Entire Conference:	\$98.00
Without Institute:	\$98.00

Presenter Rate

Entire Conference:	\$45.00
Without Institute:	\$30.00

Institute only registration is \$15.00 before September 30; \$20.00 after October 1.

Scholarships:

One of the most important tenets of "Justice Now/Claiming the Spirit" is that everyone who wants to attend will be able to participate. To that end, we're offering a limited number of scholarships to those who have need. To obtain scholarship information, please contact Kevin Maly at 303-839-5540 or email him at kevinm@equalitycolorado.org.

Accessibility:

The LeBaron hotel is wheelchair accessible. If you have ASL or other special needs please contact Nick Sarchet at 303-839-5540 or email him at nicks@equalitycolorado.org by October 1.

Preliminary Schedule:

Friday, October 15:

8:30 am	Registration
9:00	Morning Session of the Institute
12:30 pm	Lunch
2:00	Afternoon Session of the Institute
3:00	Registration for non Institute conference attendees
7:30	Oneg Shabbat (Jewish service)
8:00	Opening Plenary and Keynote
9:00	Reception

Saturday, October 16:

8:00 am	Late registration
9:00	Morning workshops begin
9:30	Equality Colorado Board Meeting
12:30 pm	Lunch and keynote speaker
1:45	Afternoon workshops begin
5:30	Havdallah
6:15	Ecumenical Christian service
8:00	Smoke Brush Theatre presents, "Eye of the Gull."

Sunday, October 17:

9:30 am	Workshops
11:00	Brunch and Closing Plenary

Registration:

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

email: _____

Register me for (check all that apply):

- ☐ Entire Conference
- ☐ Conference without the Institute
- ☐ Institute only
- ☐ ASL interpreter - by October 1

Payment Method

- ☐ Check, payable to Equality Colorado
- ☐ Charge to my ☐ VISA or ☐ Master Card

Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____

Helminiak to be Featured Presenter at Justice Now/Claiming the Spirit

Daniel Helminiak, Ph.D., author of best-selling GLBT title, *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, will present workshops at Equality Colorado's Justice Now/Claiming the Spirit conference to be held in Colorado Springs, October 15-17.

In addition to explaining biblical material to those who participate in his workshop on homosexuality and Scripture, Helminiak will also present a workshop on sexual ethics for GLBT people. He will draw on insights from his work with Dignity USA and the work he did for his two volumes on spirituality.

Helminiak's book *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* has consistently occupied a spot in the Top-10 list of GLBT titles since its publication in 1994. Bishop John Shelby Spong says of the book, "Helminiak's words will bring hope to many who feel that God has rejected them." James B. Nelson, familiar to many GLBT readers as author of *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Ethics*, says, "Dr. Helminiak's book is the most thoughtful, lucid and accessible summary I know of current biblical scholarship relating to homosexual issues." L. William Countryman, author of *Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today*, concurs finds that Helminiak shows "that the Bible says something quite different [about homosexuality] from what is often claimed."

Helminiak's contributions to spiritual issues go far beyond his discussions of Scripture. With Ph.D.'s in both theology and psychology, Helminiak is the author of two recent groundbreaking volumes entitled *The Human Core of Spirituality and Religion* and *The Human Sciences: An Approach via Spirituality*. His work in these volumes has been hailed as "clear, convincing and practical" by Robert L. Potter of the University of Kansas. Potter goes on to state that readers of Helminiak's works in the area of spirituality "will come away from [them] with a profound sense of the reality of spirit as a natural dimension of the human experience."

Helminiak has conducted workshops to standing-room-only crowds at NGLTF's Creating Change National Convention and at Dignity USA's 1999 biennial convention held this past August in Denver. Local participants at the Dignity convention were especially eager to secure Helminiak as a featured presenter for Justice Now/Claiming the Spirit.

Dr. Helminiak's books will be on sale at Justice Now/Claiming the Spirit and Helminiak will be available for autographing and conversation.

Return to Equality Colorado

PO Box 300476 Denver CO 80203

fax: 303-839-1361

For more info, call 303-839-5540 or 888-

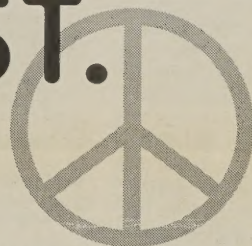
557-4441

or email Nick Sarchet

nicks@equalitycolorado.org



THERE'S MORE POWER IN YOUR MIND THAN YOUR FIST.



STOP.THINK.PEACE.

VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOU IS JUST PLAIN WRONG.
SO WHETHER YOU'RE LASHING OUT WITH WORDS, A WEAPON, OR A FIST—STOP. THINK. PEACE.
HERE'S HOW TO REALLY USE YOUR POWER, FOR OUR GENERATION AND THE ONES TO COME:

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REPORT hate crimes when you see them. Call:

303.839.5540
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888.557.4441 (tollfree outside denver)

STOP.THINK.PEACE.





Equality and Justice for All . . . No Exceptions

Denise de Percin

I look at Equality Colorado's slogan so many times in a day that often I fail to fully see it or think about it. But that slogan is one of the reasons that I came to work for the Anti-Violence Program just over a year ago.

We cannot work on securing rights for GLBT people without including everyone in our community. And our community is incredibly diverse: we come in every conceivable combination of race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, gender identity, immigration status, national origin, economic class, ability, and sexual orientation.

There is another reason why it is important to include each and every person in our struggle for human rights and dignity. It is the right thing to do. To secure justice for some at the expense of others is not progress – that is a shell game, and such gains come at a price that is way too costly.

GLBT activists often emphasize how important allies are to our efforts. If we expect to have allies, we must be allies – thoughtful, serious allies. The people who speak vociferously against the GLBT community frequently oppose affirmative action, choice, and a living wage. We must understand that our struggle for justice is tied profoundly to the struggle of people who are not exactly like us.

For this issue of the Equal Times, the Anti-Violence Program invited the Anti-Racism Alliance of Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) to write an article for this page. The AVP works closely with members of the CCADV to ensure that competent services are provided to all victims of partner abuse. Our intent here is to provide some understanding and context for the importance of anti-racism work within the GLBT community.

Highlights from the Colorado Safe Schools Coalition

Leslie Burkholder

Colorado Safe Schools Coalition (CSSC) is currently working with two metro area high schools providing intensive technical assistance and ongoing training offered to both faculty and students. At both of these schools, CSSC has implemented a name-calling survey focusing on seven types of name-calling: age/grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation (specifically gay, lesbian or bisexual), disability, religion, and body shape/size. The survey will be implemented again at the end of this current semester to measure any change that has taken place following efforts on the part of staff and students to make their school a safer place for all students.

Additionally, CSSC is working on many other exciting and challenging projects. The following are some examples of current projects: collaborating in planning and implementing of local teen health conference; technical assistance and training for an additional high school within the Denver metro area; ongoing collaboration with other regional safe schools coalitions; facilitating a workshop session at the national GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educators Network) Conference this fall; and facilitating a workshop at Equality Colorado's Justice Now Conference this fall.

The coalition is experiencing a tremendous amount of growth and development of late, and a strategic planning session has been scheduled at the end of September that will include visioning and planning for the future of Colorado Safe Schools Coalition. The Steering Committee is looking forward to many current coalition members, as well as many potential coalition members, participating in the strategic planning process, and the exciting plans for the future of CSSC that will come out of that session. If you would like to obtain information about participating in the strategic planning for CSSC, or how you can participate in other ways with CSSC, please contact Leslie or Carter at 303-839-4450.

24 Hour Crisis Line

Experiencing anti-gay harassment in your place of work, in your school or elsewhere in the community? Or maybe you are the victim of domestic violence or know someone who is? Call our crisis line.



In the Denver area: (303) 852-5094
Statewide: (888) 557-4441 ext.2

AVP Posters, T-shirts, & Bumper Stickers Now Available

Stop. Think. Peace. You should be seeing those words, along with the "peace sign," everywhere in this issue of Equal Times, as well as on matchbooks in the bars, on posters in faith communities and shops, on the bumpers of cars, and on t-shirt wearing folks throughout the state. These are all a part of the Anti-Violence Program's general outreach campaign. The materials were developed by AOR, Inc., Agency Off Record and are available at the Equality Colorado office. Posters and matchbooks are free; t-shirts (you just gotta have one!) are \$15.00 and bumper stickers are \$1.00. Funding to support this campaign and other work of the Anti-Violence Project comes from The Denver Foundation, UPN KTVD-20, Coors Brewing Company, and The Buell Foundation.

How to Obtain Stop the Violence Materials:

Posters and Matchbooks:

Call Equality Colorado at 303-839-5540 (metro area) or 888-557-4441 (statewide) and we will send you the materials or complete the form below and return it to Equality Colorado.

T-Shirts and Bumper Stickers:

Please complete the form below or call Equality Colorado at 303-839-5540 (metro area) or 888-557-4441 (statewide) to place a credit card order.

Order Form:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Please indicate the products and quantity that you desire:

- | | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| ☐ T-Shirts | Quantity _____ | X \$15.00/item | Total _____ |
| Circle your T-Shirt Size | S M L XL | | |
| ☐ Bumper Stickers | Quantity _____ | X \$1.00/item | Total _____ |
| ☐ Posters | Quantity _____ | NO CHARGE | |
| ☐ Matchbooks | Quantity _____ | NO CHARGE | |

Please Return this form to:
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PO Box 300476
Denver CO 80203

Questions?

Call 303-839-5540 (metro area) 888-557-4441 (statewide)

IDENTIFYING COVERT RACISM

Misti Cossett, Co-Chair for the Anti-Racism Alliance of CCADV

The Anti-Racism Alliance of the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a multiracial group, dedicated to the eradication of racism. In the spirit of our Alliance, it is our continuing commitment to work with all Coalition members and committees to end all forms of oppression, recognizing this can only happen in conjunction with the eradication of all oppression, including, but not limited, to classism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, ablism, and aduldism.

It is inherently true that we are much more prepared to defend ourselves against observable, defiant attacks than underlying, unconscious, or concealed maliciousness. It is the latter that causes us to question our belief system and sense of judgment. It is also the latter that allows us to build long-lasting defenses because we can never tell, as is the case of observable behavior, who are our allies. We can immediately respond to physical acting out or a direct threat. However, when the threat is indirect or occurs through mixed messages, we often become weary in our dealing with simple, everyday situations. Such is the case with covert racism. Because of its very nature, many people may not recognize it in themselves or deal with it because of the fear that they will be judged. Fear of being called "racist" is so deeply rooted in our society that we are afraid at times to even talk about racial issues. However, covert racism, like many other forms of oppression, is based on ignorance and fear, and it prevails out of one's desire to maintain comfort.

What is covert racism? It is the makeup of underlying, conscious or unconscious, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that demonstrate a level of discomfort, isolation, or hate towards another group based on their race or color. Why do we need to know about it? It is these very beliefs that lead us in the decisions about who our friends will be, who we want to work with, and how we decide, consciously or unconsciously, to treat others. Covert racism leads to institutional racism, which leads to oppression. Covert racism takes on its disguise in many forms:

Assumed similarity is the belief that

one's own ethnicity and its culture is the norm for all people and ignoring or seeing as irrelevant the issues that face persons of color, similar to heterosexism that is experienced by members of the GLBT community.

Separatism is conscious or unconscious behavior based out of fear that keeps one separate from persons of color, i.e., moving to a neighborhood where only persons of the same ethnic group reside, having friendships only with persons from the same ethnic group.

Tokenism is the belief that having one or a few friends or co-workers who are persons of color makes one culturally aware or competent

Color blindness is believing that all people are the same regardless of their color and, therefore, receive the same opportunities OR not seeing people's culture as important to their identity

Ignoring white privilege is not recognizing that white people have privileges in this society simply because they do not have to endure the racism, discrimination or oppression that is experienced by persons of color

White guilt is when a white person works on anti-racist issues solely because she or he feels guilty for what persons of color have endured OR makes quick decisions about persons of color (decisions to hire, working extra hard to please the person of color, etc.) based on his or her guilt for the minority race as a whole.

Since these ideas are often unconscious, I challenge others to look at their thoughts, feelings, and behavior and see how these ideas permeate their lives. Sometimes, comfort is safe and necessary, but it can also foster a narrow mind. If you leave a class, discussion, or presentation on anti-racism feeling warm and enlightened without ever feeling the discomfort, then you have not experienced the pain that is inevitably a part of racism. I challenge you to do so and hang on tight!! The road to true recovery from this social ill is painful and laden with emotion, but the journey is necessary and just. Isn't that the path for any kind of recovery?



Notable Quotables

"It's just possible that Matthew Sheppard didn't die because he was gay; he died because Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson are straight."

*JoAnn Wypijewski in
the September 1999 issue of Harpers Magazine*

"To avoid criticism, one must say nothing, do nothing, be nothing."

Aristotle

"If homosexuality is a threat to the survival of the human race, so is virginity."

*Headline of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram on
August 30, 1999*

"Speech has power . . . Words do not fade. What starts out as a sound ends in a deed."

Rabbi Abraham Heschel

"If a couple talks through an issue and still disagrees, the final decision goes to the man."

*James C. Dobson, Founder of Focus on the Family
Denver Post 8-1-99*

"Is it possible to ask [Rep.] Barney Frank to come in and explain how two men make love? Let him gross you out for a few minutes."

*Terry Horn, a Washington DC minister
Reported in "The Hill" June 16*

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